

## **Excerpts from my field diary (July 2009 onwards)**

**Pankaj Oudhia**

### **Curse of Parthenium is spreading every hour then why it's not a burning issue?**

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One week, two weeks, three weeks and now three months, there is no Google alert of Parthenium hysterophorus. I have fixed Google alert for Parthenium but alerts are not coming. It is very shocking. It clearly indicates that new webpages on Parthenium are not coming. During September every year I get few alerts. Rest of the year there is no new activity in the field of Parthenium research. It is matter of worry. As you have I was publishing International Parthenium Research News [IPRN] but due to lack of new material on Parthenium I was forced to publish joint issues and finally I decided to make it as annual publication.

Last week I attended International Conference on Biodiversity in Mysore. There were special sessions on Parthenium. I was eager to learn about new research in the field of Parthenium management. But nothing was new in this conference. The researchers presented old slides and they were not full of enthusiasm. From chemical control to compost making, I felt that I am attending Second International Conference on Parthenium Management in Bengaluru. It seems that nothing new has been done in the field of Parthenium research.

Parthenium is spreading very rapidly in biodiversity rich zone. There is no doubt in it. The problem is becoming serious hour by hour. During this conference Dr. Pandey from Jabalpur explained that how Parthenium is becoming curse for forest in Central India. I feel that there is need to present true pictures among the planners and common people. You will find a picture of cow grazing in Parthenium infested field but still I am searching the picture of Tiger sitting in Parthenium population or water sources surrounded by Parthenium and Deer are in dilemma to reach to it in peak summer noon. Many years back I was in Pench Tiger reserve where I found Parthenium along with Pench River inside the reserve. I took picture but it was not much impressive. During recent visit to Kanha National Park I observed Parthenium inside forest. I wrote much about it through my writings.

I feel that there is need to conduct research in dense forest where Parthenium is becoming real curse for all types of flora and fauna. We are seeing the dignitaries appealing to save the Tiger. Different social organizations are coming forward to raise fund for Tiger protection. They must be informed that how Parthenium is curse for Tigers and herbivores on which Tiger feeds.

In every conference on Parthenium the organizers invite modern medical experts to deliver lecture on Parthenium allergy. Instead of focusing on Parthenium allergy specifically they cover broad aspect of allergy and then pollen allergy. It indicates that not much work is in progress on Parthenium allergy specifically. I feel that there is a need to form a task force of medical experts to collect all information about Parthenium allergy from different corners of India and conduct researches. There must not be the limitation of fund. When I talk about funds I feel depressed. It is general trend that whenever fund is there you will find specific Parthenium parasites around it. These are the researchers occupying top positions in government organizations. They emerge from back stage suddenly and get control over fund. During this conference I was told that millions have been wasted in the name of Parthenium management in last few years and now when funds are finished no one is uttering a word on Parthenium and its management. If this is true then it is a matter of shame. This lobby will never allow us to manage the Parthenium as no Parthenium means no fund.

During this conference, I met the young researchers from Engineering college, Bengaluru. They conducted research on utilization aspect of Parthenium. It was a part of their biotechnology course. When they presented their work everyone was astonished. Their methodology was very good and in limited period they tried to cover all aspects using the laboratory facilities they were having. During informal discussion they informed that at present they are working in IT but want to remain in touch with this research. In college their juniors are still working on it. In True sense I want to help these young researchers. They asked for funds available for young researchers. I assured them and introduced them to senior researchers.

I was informed that a proposal is in pipeline to organize Third International Conference on Parthenium Management at the end of this year. This news again forced me to think in this direction. The burning question is that who will sponsor this event and why? Parthenium is creating big losses more then ever but for sponsors Parthenium issues is not a hot cake. They may suggest to include more herbs in it or cover Parthenium as side topic in main topic like Biodiversity as we saw in Mysore. It is really hard to organize a conference focused on Parthenium only. It is a bitter fact.

I remember the days of First International Conference on Parthenium when I was research scholar. I wrote to the organizing secretary Dr. Patil. He welcomed my enthusiasm and accepted my paper for presentation. He made many concessions. In this conference I met Dr. Mahadevappa for the first time and his dedication motivated me to work on Parthenium at this scale. Such encouragement is much for the young Parthenium research. We must make concessions for them, encourage them through awards and appreciation. Our generation has initiated the work of Parthenium management but new generation will have to continue it for their survival. I must suggest the organizers to arrange special session for young Parthenium researchers but I know they will ask that who is going to sponsor it?

As always I will give my full support to raise funds for such conferences. Parthenium workers must come forward to organize such events and make it success. Instead of organizing Parthenium conferences in isolation there is need to organize one event by investing all energies.

### **How to Cite this Research Document**

Oudhia, P. (2010). Curse of Parthenium is spreading every hour then why it's not a burning issue? <http://www.pankajoudhia.com>

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